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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 1480

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
HAZARDS OF AERIAL SPRAYING OF PESTICIDES IN MINDANAO WITH A
VIEW OF CREATING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS THAT WILL STRIKE A
BALANCE BETWEEN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS, AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND VIABILITY

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 16 provides: "The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature";

WHEREAS, in an article by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* dated 8 November 2009, it was reported that the Department of Health (DOH) urged the Department of Agriculture (DA) to stop the aerial spraying of chemicals practiced by banana plantations in Mindanao "until proof of its safety is clearly established by the industry";

WHEREAS, the DOH Resolution states that aerial spraying has been banned in certain countries because of concerns on drift and its potential health effects;

WHEREAS, a study conducted in Barangay Camocnaan in Guihing Town, Davao del Sur, established that the diseases of people living inside and around banana plantations were caused by the drift of chemicals sprayed aerially;

WHEREAS, a publication of the Inter Press Service (IPS) and the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ) reported that the opposition to the aerial fumigation began when locals saw their harvests of coconut, cacao, and lanzones plummet by more than 50% due to direct contact with the chemicals aside from an aphid infestation that migrated from the fumigated banana fields; due to these, vegetable crops withered, livestock died, and people no longer felt safe drinking rain water;

WHEREAS, a landmark ordinance was passed by Davao City in February 2007 outlawing the practice of aerial spraying of pesticides in an area where there is an entrenched banana industry with a 30-year history of aerial spraying;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA), which represents as many as 18 corporations, filed suit claiming the ordinance is unconstitutional and will cause substantial economic damage to the region;

WHEREAS, the ordinance allegedly resulted in the retrenchment of workers in Davao City as banana plantations reportedly had to reduce farm acreage because the ordinance has made it impossible to control the Sigatoka disease in the territory without territorial fumigation;

WHEREAS, bananas are the Philippines' second most abundant export crop, with Mindanao producing 75% of the country's yield;

WHEREAS, the issue of aerial application of pesticides pitted the government and the business industry against each other; those affected are caught between a situation where on the one hand, their health is at risk should further aerial fumigation continue, and, on the other hand, a possible loss of employment and reduced economic activity should the government ban the aerial application of pesticide;

WHEREAS, striking a balance between environmental and health concerns with economic growth and viability must be the guiding principle in coming up with measures to address this contentious matter of aerial spraying;

WHEREAS, one such alternative that may be pursued is organic farming on a large scale;

WHEREAS, organic farming will not endanger the health of people in surrounding areas, and will not harm the environment; it will also promote employment and economic growth;

WHEREFORE, it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation, on the reported health and environment hazards of aerial spraying of pesticides in Mindanao with a view of creating sustainable solutions that will strike a balance between health and environmental concerns, and economic growth and viability.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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